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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : United States Mission BERLIN
TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

REF : Berlin's Despatch 703, June 6, 1961.

August 7, 1961

[illegible]

SUBJECT: Soviet Zone of Germany -- Refugees, Border Crossers (Grenzgaenger), East German Police Controls and Recent East German Legal-Judicial Actions.

GENERAL REMARKS:

The subjects of refugees, border crossers, East German police controls, and recent East German legal-judicial actions are all part of what may be succinctly described as the "second Berlin access problem." The first Berlin access problem concerns, of course, Allied and German access between the Federal Republic and West Berlin. Directly involved in this first problem is the legal and political issue of the "quadrupartite status" of Berlin. The eventual resolution of the first Berlin access problem will therefore directly affect the fate of the Allied garrisons in Berlin and the freedom of the 2.2 million West Berliners. The "second access problem," on the other hand, concerns primarily the access to (West) Berlin of Germans residing in the Soviet Zone. It thus also involves, at some point or another, the quadrupartite right of unhindered travel by all persons physically present in the Soviet Sector of Berlin to the Western Sectors of Berlin. The eventual solution of the "second Berlin access problem" will deeply affect the future of the 16 million residents of the Soviet Zone and of the Soviet Sector of Berlin.

Maneuvers and counter-maneuvers by all parties concerning the first Berlin access problem are today still largely limited to the exchange of diplomatic notes, to the holding of conferences and to propaganda attacks. These maneuvers may therefore still be described as belonging to a "pre-crisis" stage, or perhaps only to a "potential crisis" stage. The second access

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problem", on the other hand, has already moved somewhat nearer to a "crisis" stage as the result of recent repressive actions by the Soviet Zone regime and of the concrete responses thereto by the East German/East Berlin population. That this struggle between regime and populace is still in a transitional, indecisive phase is perhaps most dramatically shown by the fact that the current refugee flow is more than double what it was a month ago, despite the massive police controls on travel which the Soviet Zone regime has introduced in the meantime.

Some of the Soviet Zone regime's recent repressive actions and some of the populace's responses thereto are discussed below under the following separate headings: Refugees, Border Crossers, East German Police Controls, and Recent East German Legal-Judicial Actions.

REFUGEES:

During the month of July, 30,444 refugees were officially received at the West Berlin refugee reception center (Marienfelde). It is estimated that there were at least another 3,000 refugees who flew directly from West Berlin to the Federal Republic without registering at Marienfelde. The actual flow into Berlin in July, therefore, was in the vicinity of 33,000, for an average flow of approximately 1,100 per day. The most recent weekly statistics (July 30 - August 5) indicate that the refugee flow now is at a statistical plateau between 1,300 - 1,500 per day.

The impact on the East German economy of such a rate of flow, if continued, would be unquestionably disastrous. In this connection, it is interesting to note that Hermann Matern, generally regarded as second most important member of the SED Politburo, on June 28 publicly described even the much lower earlier flow of 550 refugees per day (that is, less than half the current daily flow) as leading to "national disaster."

Up to July 20, the composition of the refugee flow was more or less the same as that of previous periods; for example, approximately the same percentage of youth, doctors, teachers, writers, etc., were tabulated July 1-July 20 as in the first six months (January - June) of 1961. However, following the introduction by the GDR regime of intensive police controls on July 17, ostensibly to control travel to the Kirchentag, the composition of the refugees flow rapidly began to change. Whereas in the first two-thirds of the month "unaccompanied juveniles" (i.e., youth 14-25 years of age) still arrived in the same ratio as in previous months, constituting approximately 20-22 per cent of the daily flow, their portion fell off radically to only 10-11 per cent of the daily flow by the end of July and remained at that low level during the first five days of August. This drop in the percentage of "unaccompanied juveniles" resulted primarily from the practice of the East German police of removing almost all males between the ages of 12 and 35 from trains coming from the Soviet Zone to Berlin. A further result of this police practice has been the growing number of "fatherless" young families at Marienfelde. More and more young wives, 20-35 years old, with young children, are now waiting in vain for husbands at the Berlin refugee camps.

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BORDER CROSSERS:

Concurrently with its massive campaign against refugees, the East German regime has been carrying out a major action against the so-called "border crossers" (Grenzgaenger) -- i.e., against persons who reside in East Berlin or in the Soviet Zone and who work in West Berlin. Official German figures placed the number of border crossers in June 1961 at somewhat in excess of 60,000; according to other statistics, their number may be as high as 30,000, if one takes into account part-time workers.

Besides the various financial discriminatory measures which the regime has published within the last month, making it almost impossible for border crossers to purchase major durable goods or major services or to pay taxes or rents in any currency except Western D-Marks, the regime has also sought to influence the "border crossers" to give up their jobs in West Berlin by other means. Border crossers have been visited in their homes by SED functionaries, and sometimes even by roadies. Some have been expelled from housing projects. Many have had their names posted under insulting slogans on public boards. Ever larger numbers of border crossers are now being forced by the police to disembark from suburban commuting trains and from the S- and U-Bahn trains within Berlin for interrogation and examination.

Within the last week the combined harassments of financial discrimination, psychological pressures and police action have resulted in large numbers of border crossers joining the refugee flow. In the first four days of August, for example, 709 of the 4,970 refugees were "border crossers." They thus constituted 14.6 per cent of all refugees, whereas previously their average ranged between 2 per cent (in June 1961) and 4 per cent (in July 1961). Of the border crossers who have become refugees recently, approximately 50 per cent resided previously in the Soviet Zone suburbs of Berlin and approximately 50 per cent resided in Berlin itself.

EAST GERMAN POLICE CONTROLS:

Beginning with the week in which the Kirchentag was held in Berlin (July 17-24), the East German regime intensified greatly its controls over travel to and within Berlin. As of August 5 the following situation applied:

A: In the Soviet Zone:

- 1) Roads: Under the pretext of a "census of traffic on the autobahns" (which was to have lasted only one day--July 21), the regime was carrying out a 100 per cent control of all vehicles which entered the autobahn systems in the Soviet Zone. All persons suspected of being refugees were being removed from the vehicles. Similar, though sporadic, mobile checks were being carried out on other roads as well.
- 2) Railroads: The controls on all long-distance trains bringing passengers from the Soviet Zone to Berlin were severe. Family groups en route to Berlin were being removed at intermediate stations, and "unaccompanied

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putting men" (ages 12-35 years of age) were generally removed en masse while police escort at the last station in the Soviet Zone before the train entered Berlin.

- 3) Suburban Trains. Since August 1, S-Bahn suburban train controls at the Soviet Zone/Berlin city boundaries have been especially rigorous. Large numbers of refugees and border crossers en route to their places of employment in West Berlin have been removed daily from S-Bahn trains. The border crossers were told to report to Soviet Zone labor offices for jobs in the Soviet Zone.

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B. Within Berlin

In East Berlin itself the East German police have maintained the intensive controls they introduced during the Kirchentag for passengers on S-Bahn and U-Bahn trains. In addition, the police are now carrying out intensive checks on pedestrian traffic at such important sector crossing places as Potsdamer Platz and Brandenburger Tor.

RECENT EAST GERMAN LEGAL-JUDICIAL ACTIONS:

In addition to its recent discriminatory financial legislation and its intimidating police controls, the East German regime in the last ten days has begun a systematic campaign in the courts against alleged "smugglers" and against "traders in humanity." The court actions against "smugglers" have taken place principally in East Berlin and in the Soviet Zone Bezirk of Potsdam which surrounds Berlin. These trials are intended, of course, to serve as warnings to "border crossers."

The court actions against "traders in humanity," on the other hand, are intended to frighten potential refugees. Of these trials the most notorious to date was the show trial in East Berlin of four men and one woman who received sentences of imprisonment variously ranging from two to fifteen years. In addition to the principal "show trial" in East Berlin, every Bezirk in the Soviet Zone during the week ending August 5 had at least one show trial involving "traders in humanity."

Besides serving to intimidate current border crossers and potential refugees, the results of these trials will be employed propagandistically, of course, to justify such further legislative or administrative repressive measures which the Soviet Zone regime may decide to take to harass border crossers further and to reduce radically the rate of the refugee flow.

For the Assistant Chief of Mission.

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